
GUIDELINES ON APPLYING PATIENT RESTRAINTS

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines on the use of restraints in the field or during transport for patient who are violent or potentially violent, or who may harm themselves or others.

AUTHORITY

California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Sections 1000075 and 10000159. Welfare and Institutions Code 5150. California Administrative Code, Title 13, Sections 1103.2 Health and Safety Code, Section 1798.6

PRINCIPLES

1. The safety of the patient, community and responding personnel is of paramount concern when following this policy.
2. Restraints are to be used only when necessary in situations where the patient is potentially violent and is exhibiting behavior that is dangerous to self or others.
3. Prehospital personnel must consider that aggressive or violent behavior may be a symptom of medical conditions such as head trauma, alcohol, drug-related problems, metabolic disorders, stress and psychiatric disorders.
4. The method of restraint used shall allow for adequate monitoring of vital signs and shall not restrict the ability to protect the patient's airway or compromise neurological or vascular status.
5. Restraints should be applied by law enforcement whenever possible. If applied, an officer is required to remain available at the scene or during transport to remove or adjust the restraints for patient safety.
6. This policy is not intended to negate the need for law-enforcement personnel to use appropriate restraint equipment that is approved by their respective agency to establish scene-management control.

PROCEDURE

The following procedures should guide prehospital personnel in the application of restraints and the monitoring of the restrained patient.

1. Restraint equipment must be either padded leather restraints or soft restraints (e.g., posey, Velcro or seat-belt type). Both methods must allow for quick release.
2. The application of any of the following forms of restraint shall not be used by EMS prehospital care personnel:
 - a. Hard plastic ties, any restraint device requiring a key to remove, hand cuffs or hobble restraints
 - b. Backboard, scoop stretcher or flat as a "sandwich" restraint
 - c. Restraining a patient's hands and feet behind the patient (e.g., hog-tying)
 - d. Methods or other materials applied in a manner that could cause vascular or neurological compromise

3. Restraint equipment applied by law enforcement (handcuffs, plastic ties or "hobble" restraints) must provide sufficient slack in the restraint device to allow the patient to straighten the abdomen and chest, and to take full tidal volume breaths.
4. Restraint devices applied by law enforcement require the officer's continued presence to ensure patient and scene-management safety. The officer shall accompany the patient in the ambulance or follow by driving in tandem with the ambulance on a predetermined route. A method to alert the officer of any problems that may develop during transport should be discussed prior to leaving the scene.
5. Patients, if possible, should not be transported in a prone position. Prehospital personnel must ensure that the patient's position does not compromise respiratory/circulatory systems, or does not preclude any necessary medical intervention to protect the patient's airway should vomiting occur.
6. Restrained extremities should be evaluated for pulse quality, capillary refill, color, nerve and motor function every 15 minutes. It is recognized that the evaluation of nerve and motor status requires patient cooperation, and thus may be difficult to monitor.
7. Restrained patients shall be transported to the most appropriate receiving facility within the guidelines of the Responsibility for patient Management Protocol, Reference #14003. Allowable exceptions:
A 5150 order written by a designated psychiatric response team, when direct admission to a psychiatric facility has been arranged.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the EMS report form shall include:

1. The reasons restraints were needed
2. Which agency applied the restraints (e.g., EMS, law enforcement)
3. Information and data regarding the monitoring of circulation to the restrained extremities
4. Information and data regarding the monitoring of respiratory status while restrained